

am.
U.S.

Arkansas

1917

ON GUARD



V. D. No. 8
S. B. of H.
E.

ON GUARD

American women in France have proved their right to be there. The women in the steel-gray Red Cross uniform and the gray and blue of the Y. M. C. A. during the war came to be an essential part of the American Forces. They have won the admiration and affection of their countrymen and women because of the spirit and endurance with which they have carried out their almost superhuman tasks as nurses, their endless duties in the Y. M. C. A. huts and canteens, and their work in aiding and rebuilding the homes and spirits of the villagers in the devastated regions.

Before crossing the ocean a doctor's certificate has been required from the Red Cross and Y. M. C. A. workers, guaranteeing their soundness in health and their ability to endure the physical and mental strain of overseas work. Few of those chosen have broken down under the strain, for this test has kept out the women unfit for work in France.

In the spring drive of 1918 many American women were obliged to retreat before the advancing German troops. Beginning early in the morning one American woman, under shell fire from the large guns and airplanes, helped the village people pack up their belongings on wheelbarrows and wagons. Late at night she was almost the only person left in one of the towns with the guns thundering and the shells whizzing overhead. On returning to her own quarters she found the place filled with English soldiers. There was no chance for rest. Until two the next morning she helped the others make gallons of tea and open can after can of beans. The men had been on the march with nothing to eat for twenty-four hours. When the soldiers were all asleep there was oat-

meal and coffee to be prepared for more than two hundred. Toward morning the machine guns were heard. This meant that the Germans were near. She must pack a few belongings, join the long line of refugees on the road toward safety and spend many exhausting days in doing everything possible to relieve the suffering about her.

This woman could give such night and day service for months at a time because she had learned how to save up and wisely use her strength and energy. If she had not guarded her health, her desire to serve would have been useless. Freedom from unnecessary physical handicaps, therefore, has been one of the greatest aids to the women in France.

Soundness of body has been needed by the women and girls at home as well. Many women workers, replacing men in the essential industries and on the farms, have been put under almost as great tests as the women in France. Their success has, in the words of President Wilson, "added a new luster to the annals of American womanhood."

RESPONSIBILITY OF AMERICAN WOMEN.

The patient tasks of reconstruction will occupy the energies of women no less than war, and they will have as great need for physical health. The pride of woman or girl will not let her fall behind in the coming years.

But more important than her pride in the successes of her sex is the pride she feels for the future children of the country. Children born in occupied territories during and immediately after great wars are likely to have less physical strength than the children of the same nations born previous to the war. This happens when the women have endured such hardships that they have lost the vitality mothers need in order to have strong and vigorous children. Every girl should know that a child will inherit the physical, mental and moral qualities inherent in its father and mother.

But strength and health in the mother at the time of the birth of her child will increase the chances of a strong and sound body for her child.

The women in America did not need to suffer from the war to the extent of impairing their vitality. They have, instead, learned the advantages of health from the heroines of the war, and the necessity of building up sound bodies for themselves and for their children. They must know that health and endurance depend largely on healthy sex organs. Until recently there has been silence and secrecy in matters of sex so that women and girls have not known the close connection between the proper care and use of the sex organs and general health; and the connection between their own health and the health of future generations.

THE MEANING OF SEX.

Sex is one of the most fundamental things in life. It is that which makes a man a man, and a woman a woman. The change from girlhood into womanhood comes with the "waking up" and growth of her sex organs. The outward sign of this growth is the beginning of menstruation, or the monthly flow of blood. From this time on the girl changes gradually from the awkwardness of her early teens into the graceful, attractive period of young womanhood. The growth of a boy into a young man at about the age of fourteen is due to the growth and changes in his sex organs. His sex glands secrete an exceedingly important substance which is absorbed into his blood. The blood carries this substance or secretion all through his body, into his muscles and into his brain. It gives tone to his muscle, power to his brain and strength to his nerves. It is sex, therefore, which makes possible the attainment of manhood and womanhood.

And sex is the means of creating life itself. "The most fundamental thing in the world around

us is life; the most fundamental thing in the spiritual life to which we aspire is love. The beginnings of life and the beginnings of love are in sex."

BEGINNINGS OF LIFE.

The new life begins with the union of the egg cells of the mother and the sperm cells of the father. In order to understand this process every girl should know the plan of her sex organs. The outer opening leads to a tube which is known as the vagina, and the vagina connects with a small hollow organ which is called the womb or uterus. It is in the uterus that the unborn child develops. On either side of the uterus are two tubes, called the Fallopian tubes, which connect with the ovaries. The ovaries are no larger than an almond but they contain thousands of egg cells or ova.

Periodically an egg cell leaves the ovary and travels down the connecting tube (Fallopian tube) toward the uterus and if it does not eventually meet the male or sperm cell, passes out through the uterus and the vagina.

These male or sperm cells which are similar to the egg cells of the mother are made and stored in the sex glands of the father. When sperm cells are placed in the vagina by the organ of the father they move up rapidly through the vagina and uterus to meet the egg cell. If these cells meet the two unite. The new cell, which is part father and part mother, passes into the bag-like uterus, becomes fastened to its side and begins to grow into a child. After nine months' growth it is time for the child to be born and it is forced down through the vagina to the outer world.

At about the time the ovum leaves the ovary, an additional supply of blood is sent from other parts of the body to the uterus. If it is not

needed it passes out through the vagina. This monthly flow of blood is called menstruation. If a new life has been formed, the blood stays in the uterus and the flow of blood is not experienced again until after the birth of the child.

THE NEED FOR HEALTH.

Menstruation is thus closely connected with the main purpose of the sex organs, which is to produce new life. In order to avoid serious illness due to disorders of these organs, a girl owes it to herself and her future children to guard her health carefully during the menstrual period.

EXERCISE AND REST.

Although there should be no suffering at this time, as a matter of fact many girls do feel pain or feel bad in other ways. In case of pain, it is wise to walk less and rest more. This, of course, applies only to the period of menstruation and the time immediately before and after. *Exercise and healthful living at other times are the best preventives against suffering at the menstrual period.* A certain amount of outdoor exercise is needed for the development of a strong, vigorous and attractive body. Girls who are in offices, shops or stores may find it difficult to take enough exercise, but when an effort is made to secure it regularly, its advantages and pleasures will be realized. In many cases the problem is solved by walking to and from work instead of taking a car. There can be no pleasanter way of spending parts of Sundays and holidays than walking or "hiking" in the country and suburbs.

At the time of menstruation, even more than ordinarily, a girl needs from eight to nine hours' sleep with windows wide-open and a diet consisting of wholesome and easily-digested food. It

is important at all times to keep the bowels well regulated, but particularly so just before and during the period of menstruation. Pain often results because the lower bowel is packed and presses against the uterus at this time when it is in a sensitive state.

BATHING.

Bathing at the menstrual period is a benefit to the health as well as being necessary to comfort. As at all other times, warm water should be used at least once a day during the time of the menstrual flow for the purpose of cleansing the external parts of the organs. Cold baths, however, or any extremes of temperature should be avoided at this time. Cold water, or a sudden draft of cold air, causes shock and may stop the flow of blood, resulting in an inflammation within the uterus.

CLOTHING.

The reason for avoiding tight clothing, especially tightly laced corsets and other tight bands about the waist, is that they press against and displace the sex organs. Pain at the time of menstruation is only one of the ailments which may result from such a displacement. Narrow or high-heeled shoes, if worn constantly, cause muscle strain, interfere with the circulation of the blood, and the unnatural position into which they throw the body tends to disarrange the position of the reproductive organs. In these days of "sport shoes" it is easy to find low-heeled shoes, attractive as well as practical, for street wear at least.

Irritation of the external sex organs, caused by improper clothing, uncleanness or some abnormal condition may lead to the habit of hand-

ling these organs improperly (self-abuse). If this irritation cannot be relieved by proper bathing and proper clothing, a physician should be consulted. Such a habit, if formed, should be broken at once. It may be followed by nervous disorders, together with lessened self-respect. To overcome a habit once formed, will-power and self-control are required. The mind should be kept busy with thoughts on healthy subjects and away from sexual ideas. Good physical health must also be maintained.

POSTURE.

Correct sitting and standing (posture) is of the greatest importance to the health of the reproductive organs. Few people realize that round shoulders and slouching positions force downward such organs as the stomach and intestines so that they press upon and force out of place the reproductive organs. Not only unattractiveness but headaches, disturbances of the digestive and breathing organs, as well as a great many other disorders have been due in many cases to poor posture. The essentials of a correct standing position are (1) chin in, (2) chest up, (3) waist in and (4) weight on the balls of the feet. Of these the most important are "chin in" and "chest up." "Chin in" means that the chin is held in on the level, tilted neither up nor down. When the chin is kept in and the chest up the stomach and intestines are pulled up into place and the proper amount of room is left for the reproductive organs. Aside from all questions of health, think of the attractive, erect girl who carries herself with ease and who, by her very appearance, inspires the confidence of her employer and friends. Almost every girl can secure this valuable possession for herself.

Although care at the time of menstruation is especially needed for the good health of the sex organs, that is not all. Anything which is an aid to complete physical well-being will tend to add health and strength to the organs of reproduction. If in spite of all attempts to keep strong and healthy, a girl becomes sick, she should not fail to see a doctor. Prompt attention to a slight sickness will sometimes prevent serious illness.

General good health is a great asset. The popular girl of today is the girl who glows with life, who can swim or dance or play tennis; who has plenty of energy for fun after putting in an eight hour day, or can keep up with a man on a hike, unhampered by wobbly heels and tight clothing. This is the girl whom the people of France have come to call the American girl. She is not only able to endure long hours in factory, camp or hospital, with their accompanying strain; she is the whole-souled, level-headed, high-spirited companion of men.

THE SEX INSTINCT.

We have seen that sex is the basis of the renewal of life. It is also the most fundamental thing in love. Love is often used as the word to describe the strong attraction between men and women. This attraction is due, in large part, to the sex instinct. Sex underlies also the love of mother and child, of husband and wife—even friendship, to a great extent, is an outgrowth of sex. The sex instinct is as normal, natural and necessary an instinct as self-protection. Just as the feeling of hunger for food has been given us that we may know when to eat and thus preserve life, so the sex instinct has been given us in order that we may create life.

Like any other instinct it is evil only when it is misdirected and uncontrolled. One way in which human life differs from animal life is that men and women have the power to choose how they shall use the sex instinct. Its highest and finest possibilities can be reached only by directing it toward the building up of a home and of a family. Marriage has been accepted after centuries of experience as the best method of carrying on life, both for the individual and for the race. A man or woman, who acts in a way which may bring children into the world without provision for a respectable home or proper care, performs a cowardly act. They are called immoral by the people about them. If, moreover, the sex impulse is used selfishly for the sake of physical pleasure, for any other selfish gain or even to give pleasure to another, the opportunity for the highest and finest love in life is lost.

THE SINGLE STANDARD.

It is true that the world has formerly excused sexual immorality in men while insisting upon purity in women. One reason is that the sex instinct is more easily aroused in most men than in most women. The stronger feeling is due to one of nature's measures for promoting new life. Since the egg-cell of the mother is in readiness only at infrequent intervals, the sperm-cells must always be in readiness to unite with the ova in order that it may not be lost. But we are beginning to face facts and no longer excuse men who do not control their sex impulses. Physicians tell us that sex union is not necessary to the health of men as many people used to believe. The soldiers know, for they have been taught this truth by order of the War Department. Any man who claims that sexual intercourse is necessary to his health, is ignorant of true facts, or else is

using the lie basely to induce some girl to sacrifice herself for his pleasure. There is no longer any excuse for a different standard of morality for men and women.

Women and girls are to a great extent responsible for setting and maintaining a new standard. In the first place they must demand clean living from the men of their choice, and in the second place they must help them by avoiding actions which arouse this natural but dangerous impulse and make it difficult for them to control their conduct. Many girls thoughtlessly stimulate the sex emotions of their men friends by careless words, familiar acts and too thin, or otherwise "suggestive" and conspicuous clothing. A girl, sure of her own self-control, may see no harm in indulging in a flirtation, but she may not be aware how greatly she is arousing the feelings of the man and making herself responsible for his temptation and mistakes. If she is not the sort of girl from whom he can obtain gratification for his feelings, it frequently happens that he will go elsewhere to other girls who may be less able to protect themselves. There is a physical danger also to the self-controlled girl who indulges in frequent "spooning." Long continued "spooning" involves an emotional strain which saps the vitality and weakens the girl both physically and mentally. It sometimes makes her incapable of real affection in marriage. If girls are to demand clean living from their men friends they must learn to treat them in a frank and friendly way as comrades and to help them maintain high standards instead of trying to win their admiration by purely physical appeals.

MISUSE OF SEX.

Aside from the lost opportunities for life-long happiness the misuse of the sex instinct often

brings disaster to the health of men and women, and particularly to the children of the future. Sexual intercourse outside of marriage frequently results in the venereal diseases, syphilis and gonorrhea (sometimes vulgarly called "clap"). Any man or woman who has sexual relations outside of marriage may be infected with one or both.

To the individual man a venereal disease may mean lifelong suffering unless by long-continued treatment the germs are destroyed. Syphilis often brings in its train heart disease, paralysis, and insanity. Gonorrhea may cause blindness, incurable affections of the sex organs and inability to have children.

But this is not all. The innocent may be made to suffer as well as the guilty. The wife of a man who is infected with one of these diseases often becomes infected. Syphilis may affect her much as it does the man, but gonorrhea often affects her much more seriously. Many of the surgical operations upon women are made necessary by gonorrhea. Many women are made lifelong invalids or die of it. A very large proportion of the blind babies are made so by gonorrhea in the mother. A great many miscarriages are due to syphilis and most of the babies born dead have been killed before birth by that disease. Many babies survive defective for life.

These diseases are contagious or "catching." Usually they are passed from person to person through sexual intercourse. Infection may occur from one act only, not necessarily from a series of acts as some people have believed. It sometimes happens, too, that a person gets infected through using towels and toilets in public places, or by drinking from a public drinking cup, or from being kissed by a diseased person.

Syphilis and gonorrhea may be cured if taken in time and treated by a good doctor, but the

treatment must be long and regular. The disease often reappears many years after it is apparently cured. -

These diseases were a great menace to the fighting power of our armies. The American Government did its utmost to keep its men physically fit by removing prostitutes—practically all of whom have venereal disease—from the vicinity of the camps, by providing recreation and by educating the soldiers as to the disastrous effects of these diseases.

Every soldier was taught that any girl who will give herself to him has doubtless given herself to other men and may, therefore, be infected with a venereal disease. He was told to avoid the girls who pick up soldiers in automobiles, movies and theatres. No girl wants to be ridiculed and pointed out as an "easy mark." Self-respect should keep her from "picking up" men at any time. The girl who believes that she is doing a patriotic service by providing a "celebration" for returning soldiers is ignorant of true facts. She may unknowingly be spreading venereal diseases among these men. She is dishonoring rather than honoring these heroes. Venereal disease is a much more serious handicap to such a man than wounds themselves. Such a girl, therefore, is more dangerous to her country than were the Germans behind the machine guns.

ON GUARD.

The menace to health from venereal disease is no longer a subject to be concealed. Its effects upon men and women and future generations should be known in order that all may be on guard to help in the fight against it. The part that women and girls of America must play is to help those who are ignorant or weaker than they to avoid these diseases, to demand high standards and offer frank and open comradeship to their men friends, and above all, to be on guard that the world may be made safe for future generations.

Issued by the
ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
Little Rock, Arkansas

Reprinted by permission from the pamphlet of the
Treasury Department, U. S. Public Health
Service, Washington, D. C.

Additional copies of this pamphlet may be obtained
by addressing the

ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
Little Rock, Arkansas